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# **Impact of Social Networking Sites on school-going adolescent boys in Kashmir, India**

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## **Abstract**

*The adolescent age group is one of the most vulnerable periods of life span. It is the period that develops identity and integrity among individuals. The environmental influx to this group includes the SNS's as one of the major components, having a direct impact on the transition of adolescents to adults. It is in this backdrop, the need is to critically study the impact of SNS's on adolescent's life and identifying the key consequences that are emerging out of either using or misusing of same. Ranging from initial exposure of SNS's to disturbed social life a detailed assessment has been made to know how school-going adolescents are influenced. The mental health status and related illness due to misuse of SNS's has due assessment. The study is also identifying the core areas of intervention like monitoring and participation for effective response to adolescent problems arising out of excessive usage of same.*

**Keywords:** Social Media, Social Networking Sites, Adolescents, School Students

**Paper type:** Research Paper

## **Introduction**

The period of Adolescence is considered as one of the crucial phases of life, it is the phase of life, wherein many changes are witnessed. The changes taking place among adolescents are visible in physical, social and psychological aspects of life. Adolescence is a time of growing up from childhood to adulthood. Adolescence means 'to emerge' to achieve 'identity'. It is considered a period of physical growth but is more than that. It is a time for the maturing of mind and behaviours as well. The length of time for this period of development among adolescents varies. Adolescence can start at an age of nine (9) and end at eighteen (18) years, It can also start at fourteen (14) and end at twenty-five (25) years. The period of Adolescence is divided into three developmental stages based on physical, psychological and social changes

1. Early adolescence, 10/13-14/15 years;
2. Mid adolescence, 14/15-17;
3. Late adolescence, between 17-21, (WHO, 2005).

This age group is also regarded as children as defined by the Convention on Rights of Children which regards individuals below 18 years of age as “Children”. (CRC, 1989). The adolescent transition phase is often attained through a whole human hood, which includes the often neglected but equally important aspects, which are emotional or psychological, social and spiritual. The period of gradual transition from childhood to adulthood that normally begins with the onset of signs of puberty, is characterized by important psychological and social changes, not only physiological change. The transition of adolescence may extend over several years where young people remain in school and marry late, like in developed countries and increasingly in urban areas of developing countries (Paxman and Zuckerman, 1987). Being in transition, adolescents may no longer benefit from the attention and care that usually go to children, but they may not get the protections associated with adulthood either. Increased risk-taking and novelty-seeking are characteristics of adolescent behaviour (Crone and Dahl, 2012). It has been suggested that these tendencies may be adaptive because they trigger Adolescents to explore the world and become independent individuals (Crone and Dahl, 2012, Strang et al., 2013), On other side, adolescents are faced with the same set of developmental tasks that take them from early adolescence (beginning at puberty), through middle adolescence (roughly 16–18 years of age) and finally late adolescence (starting around 18 years through the late '20s).

There is a huge impact of environmental influx on adolescent personality, the internet and social media has emerged as one such influx, that is transforming the cultural landscape of contemporary adolescents. The term ‘Social Media’ refers to the various internet-based networks that enable users to interact with others, verbally and visually (Carr & Hayes, 2015). Social network sites (SNS) are web-based services that allow individuals to (a) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (a) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (c) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). The generations of youth are often referred to as “digital natives” because they were born during this era of digital technology and are navigating the

developmental tasks of adolescence in this relatively new and ever-evolving environment (Prensky, 2001). The majority of North American adolescents' use SNS's to communicate, form relationships, and explore their identities (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). The world of SNS's has evolved so quickly and has been conceptualized and categorized in so many ways that it is difficult to define (Gross, 2004; Subrahmanyam & Smahel, 2011). Many studies have examined the impact of SNS on adolescents such as MySpace or chat rooms and blogs only to discover that youth have moved on to other modes of communication (Subrahmanyam & Sahel). The last decade has created over-dependence on online communication due to the newest technological trends such as Facebook, Whatsapp with the inclusion of Smartphone's, this has essentially changed the landscape of Social Media. For example, while texting is still the primary form of communication for teens (Davila et al., 2012; Lenhart, 2012), the increased use of smartphones has transformed the use of this form of communication in that Facebook notification, music downloads, and computer games are now available at the user's fingertips (Subrahmanyam & Smahel, 2009). Thus, the dependence of adolescents on SNS's and their increased frequency of usage have made them vulnerable. The vulnerability context among adolescents has been impacting their; social life, family life and mental health. (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). A few studies have been conducted in the Kashmir valley to assess the use of social networking sites (SNS) by postgraduates (Hussain, Loan, and Yaseen, 2017) and undergraduate/college students (Hussain, Kubravi and Loan, 2021). Hussain, Loan, and Yaseen, (2017) found that the post-graduate students at large have started to widely make use of social networking sites and spent 1.43 hours as an average on social networking sites per day. The post-graduate mostly use social networking sites to gain knowledge, to be in touch with family and friends; to share information and promote social, religious, political and environmental awareness; and few for passing time. Hussain, Kubravi and Loan, (2021) revealed that college students use social networking sites for both academic and non-academic purposes. The majority of the students in all disciplines used social networking sites for exchanging reading material, communicating with teachers and classmates, obtaining information, and reading newspapers and magazines. However, no study has been conducted on "Impact of Social Networking Sites (SNS's) on school-going adolescent boys in Kashmir and this study will focus on the same.

## **Methodology**

The objective of this study was to investigate the impact of SNSs on adolescents, the exploration helped in identifying, why adolescents use online SNSs, analyzing how adolescents themselves determine their motivations for using an SNS and how these SNS's have impacted them largely. The present study has been done on 50 adolescent School going Boys of Kashmir valley who have been in the age group of 10- 18 years of age. The study has been carried in urban schools of Kashmir Valley of Jammu & Kashmir. The simple random sampling was followed with inclusion based on age and owning of Smartphones. The study is based on a field survey. The nature of the study is descriptive, with quantitative as well as qualitative techniques used, The related data has been collected with the help of a well-structured interview schedule, which was pre-tested before actually administering. Descriptive analysis was used to examine and interpret

the data collected. The research ethics like consent and confidentiality was upheld during the entire survey.

### **Initial Exposure to SNS's**

Adolescents are exposed to SNS's through various agencies. An exploration of the initial exposure of adolescents to SNS's the three agencies were found. The first one being self-awareness of adolescents to which 56 % of respondents belong. Self-awareness refers to learning the usage of SNS's through seeing and observing. The adolescents who were exposed to SNS's by self-awareness observed people around them using SNS's which includes family friends and relatives. The second agency includes adolescents who learn from friends. The 34% of adolescents respondents belonging to this group. It was found only 10% of adolescents have been exposed to SNS's through their families.

There has been a range of user-generated SNS's. User-generated sites are websites where everyone can freely register an account. Some of the popular sites for mass users are Twitter, Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, MySpace. All the sample adolescents had a membership to SNS's, thus, it was necessary to understand the frequency of membership, the 39 respondents were part of 1-5 SNS's, 06 respondents were part of 6-10 SNS,s and only 5 respondents were part of 10-20 SNS's. The high number of membership reflects the over the engagement of adolescents to SNS's. Besides, 98% of adolescents are spending more than 1 hour on SNS's and around 63% are spending more than 3 hours. It reflects that adolescents are spending excessive time on SNS's. Among the most common type of SNS's which are used in terms of time are Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter, it was found that Facebook and WhatsApp are commonly used by adolescents besides other SNS's. The WhatsApp is being commonly used for communication with friends and Facebook is used to search and make new friends and portray the self to the masses including friends. While interviewing asked respondents why they use SNS's, responses include;

*"I am using the SNS' from last 4 years and purpose is to reach the friends. I cannot imagine without being attached to friend and other through Facebook and WhatsApp".*

*"My sole reason is to find friends and get linked with them, I find this platform to interact with those with whom I am not able to interact physically by one or another reason"*

Children usually use SNS's without guidance or effective control, and this, in turn, reflects the challenges that have negative effects on family stability (Haythornthwaite, 2005, Dodge et al. (2011) found that increasing numbers of young children are using the Internet without adult supervision at least some of the time. The present study has revealed that 78% of adolescents' use SNS's without the consent of their parents only 22 % of adolescents are using the same with the consent of their parents. An adolescent of 15 years age with parental consent has expressed himself as following;

*My parents are aware of my use of SNS's, they know about the timing of usage and a bit about the content. They keep on pressing me to reduce the usage of SNS's and spend more time on studies. At times, I get annoyed, but then I realize.*

A 16-year-old adolescent without parental consent reflects;

*“As and when my parents enquire about what I am doing on mobile I keep on saying I am trying to figure out study material. I keep on surfing SNS's. I know my parents feel that I am not doing the same but, they have also no idea what SNS are all about. I know my parents have done a great deal of favour to me and I am, I suppose exploiting their innocence”*

The Senescence as reality is emerging when the adolescents are making unknown friends, someone they have not met in person. The 30 % of adolescents have made above 100 friends whom they don't know personally. Around, 48 % of adolescents seem to be conservative in choosing the friends, since they have not at all included any unknown friend in their profiles, while enquiring about this conservativeness. It was reflected by adolescents that they fear the role of the cyber cell and since the area is armed conflict-ridden, we don't know to who the other unknown people are affiliated.

**Table: 1.1 Exposure to SNS.s**

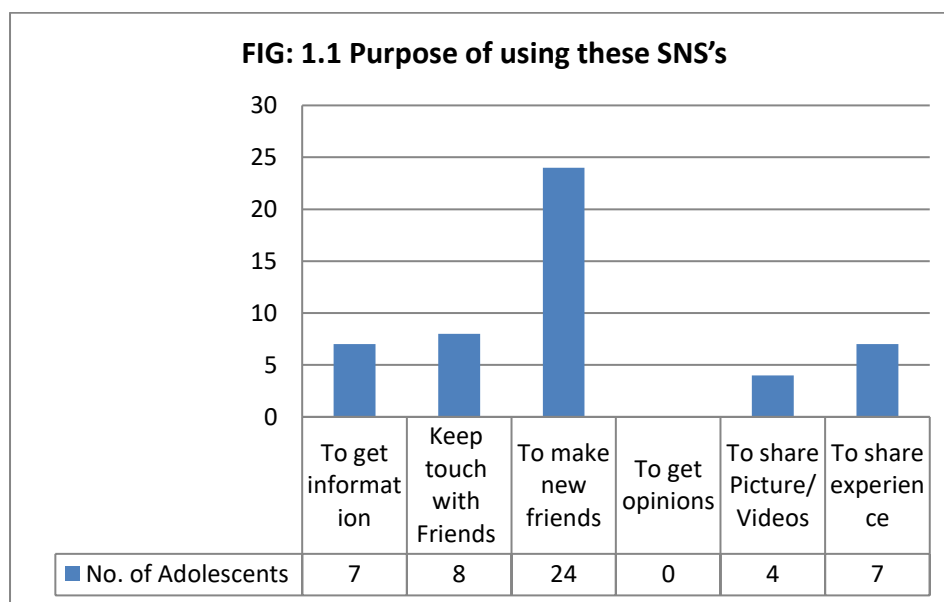
Initial exposure to SNS's	Self-awareness	Friends	Family	Total
No. of Responses	28	17	5	50
Membership of SNSs	1-5	6-10	10-20	Total
No. of Responses	39	06	05	50
How long access a day	Less than one hour	1-2 hours	2-3 hours	More than 3 hours
No. of Responses	1	11	07	31
Which social networking site among the following do you use the most?	Facebook	Instagram	Whatsapp	Twitter
No. of Responses	13	11	21	05
Parental consent for using your SNS's	Yes	No	Not sure	
No. of Responses	39	11	0	Total
How many unknown people have you added to your profile	No one	1-50	50-100	100 and above
No. of Responses	24	08	03	15

### SNS's and Social Life of Adolescents

To understand the impact of SNS's on the social life of adolescents. This study assessed motivations among adolescents for using SNS's and their direct influence on their social life. It is well established that friends are an important part of a child and adolescent's emotional and psychological development (Erikson, 1980/1959; Kohut, 1971; Rubin et al., 2004). In recent times the friendships among adolescents develop not only in person but also through SNS's. Some of these friends on SNS's are never seen physically, yet there is a huge impact of such

online friends on the behaviour of adolescents. The purpose of using the SNS's reflects the essence of behaviour exhibition among adolescents. The majority of adolescents 48% responded to the primary usage of SNS's to make new friends, 16% referred to keep in touch with the friends, 14% of respondents are using to get information and 8% were those who just like to share pictures and videos on their social networking profiles.

The essence of seeking information from SNS's is considered as one of the positive aspects of it. However, a meagre 14% are engaged in the same. When the amount of time spent surfing the SNS's is increasing it has a direct impact on the relationship with family and actual friends. This weakens the family bond and limits interaction with actual friends. This limited direct interaction of adolescents with family and friends leads to distorted social skills and limited real-life social networks among them. It can ultimately lead to their social isolation. Adolescents who do not have close friendships consistently have lower levels of self-esteem and psychological symptoms of maladjustment. When people have more social contact, they are happier and healthier both physically and mentally (Hankins & Jiao, 1999).



Before usage of SNS's the adolescents were involved in various activities like; involvement in studies, direct interaction with friends and sports activities. The usage of SNS's has hampered the outdoor activities of the majority of adolescents. From the study, an attempt was made to analyze the difference between the spending of time before and after using the SNS's among adolescents. The study revealed that 92% of the respondents use to spend time with friends, outdoor sports activities and on studies. None of the adolescents has participated alone in sports, friends and on studies. It reflects that how the change in role among adolescents has gradually changed with the incidence of using SNS's. The engagement or involvements in Sports, Physical meetings with Friends and Studies are the general aspects of socialization. These are all altogether challenged



with a new paradigm. While further enquiring the involvement of adolescents before SNS's the respondents referred;

*"I used to play football every evening with my friends in a nearby playground, now we hardly meet but we are connected online since we play PUBG... We are also connected through WhatsApp; we mostly communicate through these media."*

*"I was a part of a cricket team, I don't know its status right now, whether it is still existing or not. When I was part of the team we used to play cricket matches every week while travelling to play in other communities. We were also going for practising every evening....now mostly I play with my friend's online games...the PUBG is nowadays trending".*

Participation in sports and involvement with friends in physical activities has been replaced by online gaming solutions. The media of communication among adolescents have also drastically changed, wherein they are only meeting physically at schools. The movement of adolescents within the community and outside the community was also playing a key role in socializing them about community affairs and society at large. The confinement to home through SNS's has impacted normal socialization extremely. The positive peer pressure among adolescents in real life tends to retain the conformity among them to a larger extent. But the social media influences their ability to think independently, leading to cyberbullying. Recent studies indicate that approximately 20–35% of adolescents report involvement in bullying either as a bully, a victim or both (Bannink, 2014). Cyberbullying is any behaviour performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others (Tokunaga, 2010)

Table 1.2 Adolescent involvement before using these SNS's		
Sports	Friends	Studies
46 (92%)		
Sports		Friends
18(36%)		
Friends		Studies
33 (66%)		
Studies		Sports
28 (56%)		
Sports only	Friends only	Studies only
0	0	0

This is the fact that building relationships on SNS's are easier than ever but building strong relationships is equally difficult. SNS's are changing the pattern of relationships among adolescents, as it becomes increasingly more popular, more interpersonal relationships are being formed through this way of communicating and connecting (Pettigrew, 2008). Historically,



adolescent relationships have been viewed through socialization and acculturation occurring in close relationships attributed to proximity and distal contexts (Collins & Laursen, 2004). However, adolescents generally move beyond the relationships with their families and begin to form intimate relationships with peers. 64% of adolescents believe that strong relationships cannot be formed through SNS's. So they refer to the essence of relationships to be formed beyond these SNS's. The adolescent of 16 years referred that;

*"I tend to form a lot of friends on SNS's but I find all these relationships temporal. I believe that I need to form strong relationships outside the internet. The relationships made through the internet are not substituted to actual ones."*

*"I and my friends feel developing relationships as an opportunity to form new groups and the emergence of new social links within our communities as a priority. We are also open to form groups and links with isolated communities which can help us learn about new social relationships outside their communities."*

With the limited capacity for self-regulation and susceptibility to negative peer pressure, children and adolescents are at some risks as they navigate and experiment with social media. Recent research by Gameinfowire (2008) indicates that there are frequent online expressions of offline behaviours such as bullying, clique-forming and sexual experimentation that have introduced problems such as cyberbullying, privacy issues Sexting and Phubbing. Phubbing has been the case witnessed by 78% of adolescents. Those who have reported the cases of phubbing in routine life have also been carrying out the same. Phubbing represents "the act of snubbing someone in a social setting by concentrating on one's phone instead of talking to the person directly" (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016).

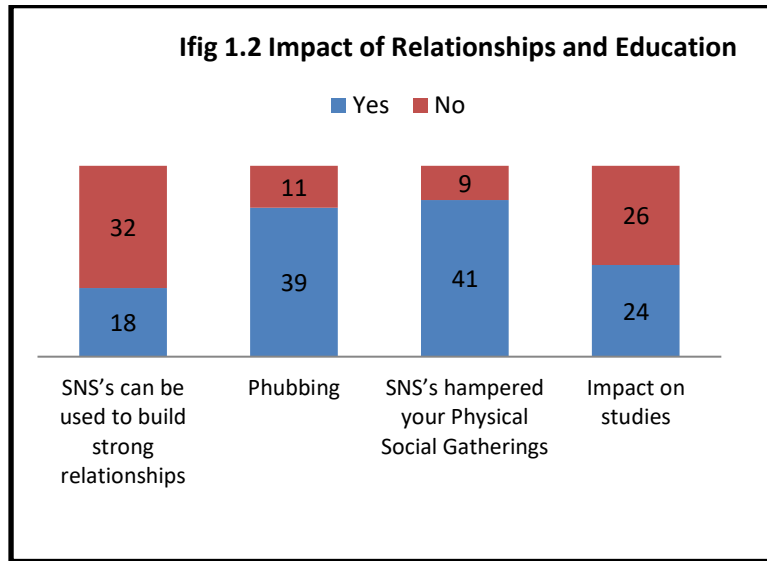
*"We are 5 members in our family and all of us have witnessed Phubbing by our family members, many times we in the evening are all busy with SNS's and if any family member calls are seeks attention it is not received. This is turning to be a normal routine."*

The physical and social gatherings among adolescents have been largely impacted by the usage of SNS's. 82% of respondents think about the same. However, the frequent curfews & shutdowns in the valley have made it more relevant. One of the respondents has referred:

*"We are confined at our homes for days and months due to frequent shutdowns. The SNS's (if there is any internet connectivity) is our only hope. It is helping us to know what is happening outside and also keeps us engaged with friends and slightly entertained."*

Typically, as students spend more time on social media, they spend less time socializing face to face or in person with other people, and these habits reduce their communication skills. The wasting of students' time on social media may also cause them to miss deadlines on occasion. Moreover, excessive social media use affects students' mental and physical health. 48% of adolescents are believing that SNS's have impacted their studies. The impact is in terms of change in scheduled study, loss of time in browsing SNS's, non-completion of assignments on time.

*“While surfing the different SNS's I spend a lot of time, despite spending hours I feel I have spent very little time. At times I am not able to complete my school assignment”*



### Mental Health and SNS's

The economic and social costs associated with mental illness are significant, and are a major cause of limitations in daily living and participation in social activities (Knapp, et al, 2011). These social and economic impacts, along with treatment costs, have placed mental illness among the 5 most costly medical conditions (Tapsell & Mellso, 2007). There is clear evidence that browsing SNS's are helping in disseminating information related to mental illness. However, there is evidence that excessive engagement on SNS's impacts the mental health of adolescents. Due to their limited capacity for self-regulation and susceptibility to peer pressure, children and adolescents are at some risk as they navigate and experiment with social media. Among the respondents, 52% were the ones who agreed that SNS's had an impact on their mental health. On being asked about the causes behind the impact on their mental health they stated the reason for late-night use of SNS's has become an addiction. One adolescent in mid 16 years of age has referred;

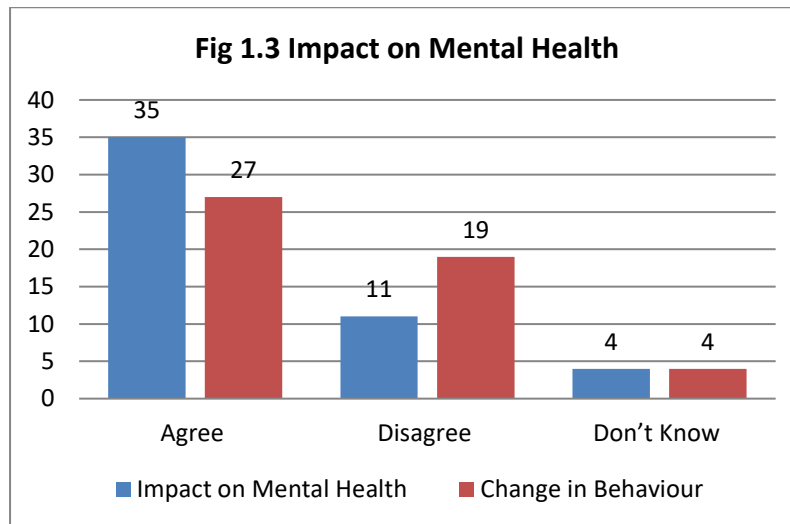
*“I have lost my sleep... not able to sleep properly...I am also not able at times to concentrate on my studies, many a times I feel fatigued during the daytime. I was forced by my parents to visit a physician, he advised me to do some physical exercises.*

#### **Adolescent of 14yrs referred;**

*“It seems to me that my emotions are not controlled and I am anxious most of the time.... Referring to which SNS's he spends more time ...he answers Facebook.”*

A new phenomenon called "Facebook depression," is defined as depression that develops when preteens and teens spend a great deal of time on social media sites, such as Facebook, and then begin to exhibit classic symptoms of depression. Within the study, it has come to the

forefront that, adolescents themselves acknowledge the impact of SNS's on mental health and are commonly having symptoms of depression like fatigue, sleeplessness, anxiousness or anxiety and undue flow of emotions.



The adolescents feel the change in their behaviour due to the impact on their mental health by the SNS's, 54% being the majority agreed that there is a change in their behaviour after using the SNS's. Some of the symptoms witnessed in behaviour change are elation, late or no response to family members, mood swings, shouting at times and low tolerance. Further 38% of respondents did not agree that SNS's lead to any impact on their behaviour and 8% were those who were not aware of any kind of impact. The change in behavioural impact has been more witnessed within a family.

*"My behaviour with my parents is the same but, I do witness that I have started yelling at them, I reflect very low tolerance when they advise me not to spent too much time on browsing SNS's".*

*"When I am browsing SNS's I don't pay head to who is talking what, nor do I wish to talk to anybody including my family (Phubbing)"*

## Conclusion

Adolescence is the crucial phase of life that needs to be controlled. This socialization phase if left unattended has different consequences on the overall development of adolescents. In a dynamic society, wherein technology has become one of the important aspects of life, the environmental influx on adolescents' personalities has been widely impacted by these technological aspects. Technology and social media in particular have thus a direct impact on the life and living conditions of people. The positive and negative impact of browsing SNS's has been directly linked with the content, frequency and platform of SNS's being used. The presence of SNS's everywhere has led to its initial exposure among adolescents through self-awareness

and observation. There is a very little percentage of adolescents who are exposed to SNS's through family members. Adolescents use SNS's without the supervision and consent of their parents and are thus, more vulnerable to negative impacts of it. One of the positive impacts of browsing SNS's is gaining information related to various aspects of life, however, the study has revealed only 14% of adolescents are seeking information through SNS's.

The SNS's has impacted mostly the outdoor activities among adolescents. The prolonged engagement with SNS's has led to a reduction in outdoor activities like meeting friends and sports. It has been witnessed that outdoor games are replaced by online games. The study revealed that the majority of adolescents aim to browse the SNS's to make new friends but, making new friends online is not in concurrence with building strong social relationships. The adolescents themselves witnessed the impact on their studies through, the change in study schedules, excessive time spent with SNS's have directly impacted the quality of studies. Often adolescents report the missing deadline of academic assignments. Further, the social networks grab the total attention and concentration of the students and divert it towards non-educational, unethical and inappropriate actions such as useless chatting, time-killing by random searching and not doing their jobs (Kuppuswamy, S., & Narayan, P. 2010).).

There is also a negative impact of using SNS's on mental health scenarios among adolescents. There is an acknowledgement by adolescents related to their mental health disturbance, citing the symptoms of disturbance like depression, anxiety, sleeplessness and fatigue. The mental health scenario with these symptoms is largely affecting the behaviour of Adolescents towards their family and friends. The notable one being phubbing. Adolescents who use SNS's more than seven hours per day are twice as likely to be diagnosed with depression (Twenge, J. M., & Campbell, W. K. 2018).

To address the issues confronted by adolescents with the usage of SNS's. There is a need for monitoring and participation from parents in controlling the access and flow of information from SNS's. the methods like facilitation in browsing right content, awareness on hazards of SNS and effective participation of parents can play a vital role in retaining the controlled process of socialization for adolescents. There is also the necessity of creating a healthy discussion on various dimensions of SNS's at different levels. The discussions should be progressive, helping adolescents to be informed and keeping them aware of outcomes of being with SNS's.

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